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REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 22, PARAGRAPHS 2 (a) AND (b), AND ARTICLE 26 OF THE CONVENTION

Review of reports by developed country Parties on measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of action programmes of affected country Parties of all regions, including information on financial resources they have provided, or are providing, under the Convention

Synthesis and preliminary analysis of reports from developed country Parties

Note by the secretariat

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Introduction

1. Pursuant to article 26, paragraph 5, of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the decisions of the Conference of the Parties, in particular decision 11/COP.1, developed country Parties shall report, through the secretariat, on measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of action programmes, including information on the financial resources they have provided, or are providing, under the Convention.

2. In decision 11/COP.1, on procedures for the communication of information and review of implementation, the Conference of the Parties:

(a) Requested developed country Parties to report on measures taken to support the preparation and implementation of action programmes, including information on the financial resources they have provided, or are providing, under the Convention;

(b) Requested Parties to submit their reports to the secretariat at least six months prior to the session at which they were to be reviewed;

(c) Requested the secretariat to compile the summaries of reports submitted.

3. The format and content of these reports are specified in paragraph 10 (c) of decision 11/COP.1.

4. The developed country Parties prepared reports on Africa, which they submitted in 1999 at the third session of the Conference of the Parties, in Recife, Brazil. In line with the recommendations of an informal meeting held by the developed country Parties in Recife on the issue of the preparation of their reports, the secretariat prepared a note to assist countries in drawing up their future reports on Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as on the northern Mediterranean and other affected countries, for submission to the Conference of the Parties at its fourth session, held in Bonn, Germany, in 2000.

5. In its decision 1/COP.5, the Conference of the Parties established a committee for the review of the implementation of the Convention, which, pursuant to the same decision, was to meet from 18 to 29 November 2002 to review reports from all regions. In addition, in the same decision, the Conference of the Parties decided that the committee, at its first session, would review updates to reports already available and new reports from all Parties, to be submitted to the secretariat no later than 30 April 2002.

6. Pursuant to decision 10/COP.4, Parties were encouraged to include information in their national reports on scientific and technical activities to combat desertification and on progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on Science and Technology.

I. REPORTS RECEIVED FROM DEVELOPED COUNTRY PARTIES

7. On 6 December 2001, the secretariat wrote to developed country Parties, requesting them to submit their reports by 30 April 2002; a reminder was sent on 4 March 2002. As of 22 May 2002, the secretariat had received the following 15 final reports and 2 preliminary drafts on which the present synthesis has been based: Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland. Most of these reports were updates to previous reports on Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and the other affected country Parties. Three countries were submitting reports for the first time: Czech Republic, Ireland and Monaco. Other reports which reached the secretariat after 22 May 2002 have not been incorporated in the present synthesis, but they are available on the secretariat's web site, http://www.unccd.int. A compilation of the summaries of the reports is contained in document ICCD/CRIC(1)/6/Add.2.

8. The secretariat sent a note to developed country Parties at the same time as its first letter, recommending the following format for the reports: they should include four sections, on Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and Central and Eastern Europe, each section (as set out in decision 11/COP.1) comprising a summary, a section on the consultative process and partnership agreements and a section on measures taken to support the preparation and implementation of action programmes at all levels, including information on the financial resources they have provided, or are providing, both bilaterally and multilaterally. The secretariat also recommended a final section on any other activities relevant to desertification control.

9. The approach taken in the present document is as follows: chapter II, a synthesis of the 17 reports received, is structured in accordance with the secretariat's recommendations on the drafting of reports; chapter III covers general trends in the implementation of the Convention, highlighting the main thrusts of the reports; and the fourth and last chapter, "Conclusions and recommendations", covers the main strategic areas, as well as issues relevant to the Committee on Science and Technology mentioned in the reports received. Section C of chapter IV endeavours to identify links and synergies with other conventions and with national development strategies, measures to restore degraded land and to set in place early warning systems so as to mitigate the effects of drought, and measures relating to the monitoring and evaluation of drought and desertification and access by affected country Parties to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how.

II. SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION PROVIDED BY DEVELOPED COUNTRY PARTIES

A. Africa

10. Of the 17 reports received, 16 cover implementation of the Convention in Africa.

1. Consultative processes and partnership agreements

11. Most of the reports express support for actions to promote consultative processes, including the involvement of local populations and their organizations at all stages of the decision-making process. All the reports support efforts geared towards the empowerment of civil society and its various constituent elements. These generally take the form of training courses and the transfer of knowledge or know-how and also include support for the establishment of women's groups and associations of farmers and livestock-breeders. Efforts to control desertification must form part of broader development and poverty alleviation programmes. One recurrent theme is that of decentralization, namely, reducing the role of the State and increasing that of local organizations and the private sector; a number of reports give particular attention to projects fostering better organization at the local level. Another widely covered issue is the use of local development activities to raise public awareness of desertification and the Convention.

12. Beyond such general statements, not much detail is provided about specific measures taken to support consultative processes and partnership agreements directly related to implementation of the Convention. These measures almost invariably take the form of support for local development activities, in such areas as rural development, forests and water resources, erosion control, and rangeland improvement. Three reports focus on the need for subregional cooperation, given the transboundary nature of desertification and of certain resources such as water. All the reports show that a considerable number of the activities to support consultative processes are conducted by non-governmental organizations; these activities, as well as the partnership agreements, are generally monitored by embassies. There is little mention of support for partnership agreements specifically related to the Convention.

13. In addition, almost all the reports mention, as part of the country's support for participatory processes and for partnership agreements, its involvement with various multilateral organizations, including those of the United Nations. The World Bank, the regional development banks, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) are widely mentioned. Certain reports even specify the country's obligatory contribution to these bodies, as well as its voluntary contribution, but without stating how much is allocated for desertification. Mention is also made of partnership agreements with the centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), in particular, those specializing in tropical and arid zones, such as the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT). One developed country records its support for the 2001 Asia-Africa Forum, on participatory processes.
A number of countries mention their support for African regional and subregional organizations, such as the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS).

2. Measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of action programmes at all levels, including information on the financial resources they have provided, or are providing, bilaterally and multilaterally

14. The reports show little evidence of measures taken to assist in the preparation of national, subregional and regional action programmes; they note that these activities have already been covered in previous reports. Generally speaking, the reports make little mention of national action programmes: they almost all point out that support measures in this area are triggered by requests and that not many such requests have been made. Most reports cite national action programmes as a priority but show little support earmarked for such programmes. We might note, however, that three developed country Parties are lead countries for four African countries; local conditions prevent one of them from developing a national action programme. Two countries mention their indirect support for five African countries and two others note the support that they provide for national and subregional action programmes through OSS. One country states that it is supporting a subregional action programme in southern Africa through the Global Mechanism. The developed countries point out that national action programmes should form part of national development and poverty-alleviation strategies. Three reports also stress that the desertification control strategy should be coordinated with strategies to protect biological diversity; they specifically refer to actions related to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The developed country Parties' also record their involvement in activities by various multilateral organizations, including those of the United Nations, related to the preparation of national action programmes, such as the UNDP Office to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNSO). As for support for the implementation of national action programmes, it is hard to identify, among all the activities in support of development activities, which relate directly to national action programmes and which relate to other programmes or plans.

15. Almost all the reports provide information on financial resources made available in 2001. It is extremely difficult, however, to identify which data, among all the data provided, relate specifically to each of the various activities, usually because the amounts cited are consolidated annual totals. More often than not, the information relates to specific, one-off operations which are not directly related to implementation of the Convention but form part of other desertification control activities. In addition, several reports cite amounts allocated to the Convention secretariat, for the participation of developing country representatives in regional meetings organized under the Convention and meetings of the Conference of the Parties and of the Global Mechanism. Financial resources provided in support of Africa can be grouped in several categories: first, institutional support, to strengthen existing regional and national bodies; second, support to non-governmental organizations; third, support for scientific activities; and, fourth, support for other general activities. Some of the reports contain almost no financial information. One report summarizes all the support provided since the accession of the country concerned to the Convention. Finally, some countries also give information on their contribution to multilateral organizations, as already mentioned in subsection 1 above.

16. In conclusion, most reports cite domestic efforts by the developed country Parties in support of their own national organizations, both public and private, engaged in cooperation with affected country Parties. These efforts include both scientific and technical activities in such

areas as erosion control, land rehabilitation, irrigation, improving livestock and crop farming practices, geographic information systems, remote sensing, the development of desertification indicators and follow-up and evaluation methods. They are also designed to support organizations offering training, such as universities or specialized centres. Finally, support is also provided to national non-governmental organizations working in partnership with the non-governmental organizations of affected country Parties, but the information supplied on this matter is very uneven (citing total amounts of funding, very detailed lists, etc.).

3. Other activities relevant to desertification control

17. All the reports give information on bilateral activities to support drought and desertification control operations. These include measures to restore degraded land, and, in particular, soil and water conservation measures, the sustainable management of resources, measures to improve crop farming and livestock-breeding, forestry and production systems and support for scientific research in these areas. Also included are measures to promote participatory approaches and to strengthen civil society, mentioned in the subsection on participatory processes; measures to support decentralization and institutional reforms, including the privatization of various sectors; and measures to strengthen national and local capacities, education and training. All the reports emphasize the integrated nature of these activities and their links with poverty alleviation. Most reports describe the arrangements for their bilateral cooperation and its goals: some provide tables of their activities in Africa, setting out the various operations in different countries, while others provide information of a more reflective and strategic nature on the methodology of their cooperation. Some reports contain little information about their specific activities. Finally, some reports note their support for specialized African regional organizations, such as the Regional Training Centre for Agro-meteorology and Operational Hydrology and their Applications (AGRHYMET), the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD) and the OSS multi-country programmes which include work on drought and groundwater resource-monitoring methods.

18. We might note here certain areas of activity which are common to all the reports. Efforts to improve water resources management are cited in virtually all reports as a top priority: these include the identification of resources, including groundwater resources, irrigation methods and activities to promote the combined management of soil and water resources in catchment areas. Efforts to improve forest management and stock raising practices are also widely covered. It appears from the reports that local and integrated rural development is the area with the most activities and which receives the largest amount of funding. Another important priority is training, either at university level, in the form of short or medium-term courses at the universities of developed country Parties, or through short-term, on-the-job training courses. Four reports describe efforts to identify synergies between the three conventions and certain projects linking these three conventions, including in the areas of agroecology and carbon sequestration.

B. Asia

19. Thirteen of the 17 reports mention implementation of the Convention in Asia.

1. Consultative approaches and partnership agreements

20. Most of the reports express support for consultative processes and partnership agreements. As described in the reports, there is no difference in approach between the policies in support of Africa and those in support of Asia. The latter are essentially designed to promote stakeholder involvement in the formulation of desertification policies, projects and programmes and to support the organization of seminars, working groups and information and other networks on the Convention and desertification control. They are also designed to support the activities of local associations of crop farmers and livestock breeders, women's groups and other bodies to promote integrated local development. The final goal is to ensure decentralization by strengthening civil society, on the one hand, and by gathering traditional knowledge and promoting access to know-how, awareness-raising and training, on the other.

21. As mentioned in the section on Africa, developed country Parties are also involved through multilateral organizations, including those of the United Nations system, such as UNDP, the economic and social commissions for western Asia (ESCWA) and for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. In addition, their activities are also conducted through the CGIAR international agricultural research institutes, such as ICARDA and ICRISAT. Some countries mention their support for subregional partnership agreements, such as those in the Pacific islands, central Asia and western Asia. Finally, a large number of activities forming part of the consultative processes are carried out by non-governmental organizations. Some countries list the non-governmental organizations which they support, while others merely mention their support for the non-governmental organizations of both developed countries and affected countries, without distinguishing between them.

2. Measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of action programmes at all levels, including information on the financial resources they have provided, or are providing, bilaterally and multilaterally

22. There is very little coverage in the reports of support specifically intended for the preparation and implementation of national and subregional action programmes. One country draws attention to its support for the coordination of national focal points through the organization of an Asian ministerial conference and the Asia-Africa Forum, referred to in the section on Africa. Another country provided support for an affected country in its efforts to incorporate desertification control into a national development strategy, through the Global Mechanism. Some reports also mention support for efforts by affected countries to update their national action programmes. Two countries are providing support for subregional efforts in central Asia to set up a subregional action programme and in western Asia for national action programmes in that area and for a subregional action programme.

23. The reports contain a wide range of information on the financial resources provided by developed countries. These resources are allocated for various purposes: thus, support is provided for the drafting of the national reports required under the Convention and for participation in the Convention's subregional meetings and in its various bodies, and funds are also allocated for a number of development, training, scientific and technical research and information-related projects.

24. Most countries refer to their domestic efforts related to the organization and coordination of desertification control and the priorities for their activities. They specify the main bodies involved, both public and private. These are generally scientific and university institutions working on such issues as desertification monitoring, improving erosion control methods, water resource management, geographic information systems and remote sensing.

3. Other activities relevant to desertification control

25. Mention is made in the developed country reports of a large number of rural development projects which are also related to desertification control and the environment in general: these are to be found in the affected countries of western Asia; in countries of southern and south-eastern Asia; and in the countries of mainland and central Asia. These projects fall into two categories: the first covers very technical projects which pursue specific goals, such as enhancing awareness and management of water resources, particularly in the arid countries of the Asian region; desertification monitoring; the use of specific methods and good agricultural practices to control erosion, such as in the loess plateau in China; protection of the plant cover; forestry and agroforestry. The second category covers the organization of civil society and participation by the public in decision-making relevant to desertification control and development. Some projects have a subregional dimension, such as the development projects in the Mekong Basin countries or those to improve water-use practices in the countries of central and western Asia.

C. Latin America and the Caribbean

26. Eight of the 17 countries report on implementation of the Convention in Latin America and the Caribbean.

1. Consultative processes and partnership agreements

27. The sections on Latin America and the Caribbean in the reports contain much the same policy statements regarding support for participatory processes and partnership agreements as the sections on Africa and Asia. That said, very few countries mention any support for consultative processes and partnership agreements. Those reports which do cover the subject refer to efforts undertaken with the support of three countries to strengthen cooperation in the Caribbean subregion as part of the implementation of the Convention. Three countries refer to a number of activities to raise awareness of desertification and of the Convention; these activities are conducted by non-governmental organizations with support from the embassies of developed countries. One country is engaged in coordination efforts among the Andean countries.

2. Measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of action programmes at all levels, including information on the financial resources they have provided, or are providing, bilaterally and multilaterally

28. The reports do not mention any direct support for the preparation and implementation of national and subregional action programmes, except for one new national action programme in the Caribbean. One developed country records its indirect support for this

procedure in two affected countries, by recommending the integration of such programmes in the environmental policies of these countries and their coordination with plans developed under two other environmental conventions.

29. Not much information is provided on the financial resources allocated to Latin America and the Caribbean. As with the other Convention regions, these efforts are divided between institutional support for the Convention (drafting of reports, participation in meetings of Convention bodies), support for numerous development and desertification control projects, for training activities and for civil society empowerment; finally, reference is also made to support for scientific research, in both developed and affected countries.

3. Other activities relevant to desertification control

30. The reports received refer to a wide range of support for development activities and activities to combat desertification and land degradation in virtually all countries of the region. Attention is also drawn to numerous regional coordination activities: these include measures to develop the mountainous regions of the Andean countries and coordination activities in such areas as Central America, relating to methodological aspects and meteorological systems supported by the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The projects fall into two categories: the first includes highly technical projects focusing on rural development, development of catchment areas, erosion control measures, management of water resources, forest protection and forest management efforts, and agroforestry; one of these very technical projects looks at the links between aspects of desertification control and climate change, such as carbon sequestration. The second category includes decentralization projects and projects to strengthen the role of civil society and to promote the use of appropriate technologies. Mention is also made of efforts relating to scientific research, at such CGIAR international research institutions as the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and the International Potato Centre (CIP).

D. Central and Eastern Europe

31. Only one report covers implementation of the Convention in Central and Eastern Europe.

1. Consultative processes and partnership agreements

32. This report mentions one activity relating to partnership agreements: subregional efforts conducted by the Višegrad Group.

2. Measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of action programmes at all levels, including information on the financial resources they have provided, or are providing, bilaterally and multilaterally

33. The report mentions no activities in this area and provides no information on financial resources.

3. Other activities relevant to desertification control

34. There is no information on this matter.

III. GENERAL TRENDS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

A. Trends in consultative processes and partnership agreements

35. In their reports, the developed country Parties all reaffirmed, and for all regions, their fundamental support for consultative processes and partnership agreements. They support all efforts to promote decentralization and to strengthen the role of civil society, whether directly through activities specially geared towards this goal, or indirectly, by supporting development activities which have a popular participation component. It should be noted, however, that there are fewer such direct activities than indirect activities. One trend which can be observed in all regions is for the number of development activities by non-governmental organizations to increase, by comparison with the numbers listed in the reports submitted to the Conference of the Parties at its third and fourth sessions. This applies equally to the non-governmental organizations of developed countries and those of affected countries and demonstrates the priority given to promoting the role of civil society. These activities are coordinated by developed country embassies. Very little support is given to partnership agreements specifically related to the Convention.

36. Several countries point out that desertification processes are both global and local and this, in their view, justifies the conduct both of activities which are very localized and others very extensive in scope, at a subregional or even regional level. Partnership agreements are essential to ensure that these activities are conducted in the best possible conditions. Activities of the latter kind are conducted through the existing subregional and regional organizations in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, thereby endorsing the important role of those organizations. Thus there is a discernable trend in all regions covered by the Convention towards greater solidarity and strengthened regional cooperation. This positive trend is supported by the embassies of developed countries in the effected countries and also through the provision of funding to regional technical and scientific centres. Besides these regional activities, two interregional activities are also mentioned in several reports: the Asia-Africa Forum and the indicators development project, implemented through cooperation between West African countries, OSS, China and the Latin American and Caribbean countries.

B. Trends in measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of action programmes, including financial measures

37. The developed country Parties confirm their fundamental interest in national, subregional and regional action programmes, with regard both to their preparation and to their implementation. The reports received contain very little evidence, however, in any of the regions, except for central and eastern Europe, of any direct support for these national,

subregional and regional programmes. The trend towards greater regional cooperation and solidarity among the different regions, referred to in the previous paragraph, does not necessarily mean that subregional and regional action programmes are already in operation.

38. As previously noted in their reports to the Conference of the Parties at its third and fourth sessions, some countries point to their role as lead countries. Developed countries provide updated information on bilateral cooperation procedures: all cooperation, in whatsoever area, must be triggered by a request from a competent authority of the requesting country. Certain countries point out that they have not received any request for the preparation of national action programmes. At the same time, it appears that national action programmes in all regions (except Central and Eastern Europe), and primarily in Africa, are indirectly supported through the involvement of developed countries in desertification control or rural development projects: the results of these projects thus also contribute to the preparation of national action programmes. None of the reports mention any field projects which have come about directly through the implementation of the national action programmes. The developed countries stress the need for national action programmes and desertification control to be closely linked with national development strategies and their resulting plans and programmes: the updates received show evidence of this trend, already noted in previous reports, for all the Convention regions.

C. Trends in other desertification control activities

39. As already noted in chapter II above, in the sections on Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, and in the reports submitted to the Conference of the Parties at its third and fourth sessions, the other desertification control-related activities fall into two main groups. The first includes activities in certain thematic areas, such as desertification monitoring, natural resources and their sustainable development. The second group covers activities designed to ensure the involvement of local populations in decision-making, to promote decentralization and the role of civil society and to foster the empowerment of certain groups, such as women, crop farmers and livestock breeders.

40. A slight difference can be observed between Africa and the other regions: in Africa, projects supported by developed countries tend to be integrated projects which combine thematic goals with the goals of popular participation. In the other regions, projects are more directly targeted towards certain thematic areas. In addition, there are several major priority areas common to all regions: water, erosion control and land degradation; improvement of crop-farming and stock-raising systems; plant cover and forests; agroforestry, particularly in Asia; and desertification monitoring. The reports make little mention of such macroeconomic goals as the stability of agricultural commodity prices or the development of economic activities other than crop-farming and stock-raising.

41. Mention should also be made of two other trends which are more clearly evident in the current reports than in those of previous sessions. The first relates to training activities, local and national capacity-building and the sharing of know-how and technology. The second relates to support for scientific research, in both developed and affected countries, in such areas as aspects of desertification and drought monitoring and the sustainable management of water, soil, plants and other natural resources. Some countries mention activities in sectors which have little relevance to desertification control, such as infrastructure and health.

D. Other trends

42. As for the support provided by developed countries for implementation of the Convention, it is evident from detailed accounts of the assistance rendered in the preparation of reports, the conduct of subregional meetings and the attendance by affected country Parties at meetings of Convention bodies (the Conference of the Parties, the Ad Hoc Working Group, the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention) that this support is continuing.

43. Generally speaking, the countries give a full account of their internal workings and show how their cooperation is effected, who directs it and how it is coordinated between the various ministries and embassies. In addition, they specify which national bodies are the competent authorities in the area of desertification and identify their relevant scientific bodies and training institutions. There appears to be growing support for cooperative ventures led by non-governmental organizations. One country even reports that one of its non-governmental organizations is responsible for coordinating activities in support of implementation of the Convention. All the countries also list their cooperation priorities and stress the need for progress in human rights and ensuring equality between men and women.

44. All the countries repeat, but with added emphasis, their conviction stated in previous reports that, while desertification control may be a priority, it must also be integrated into national strategies which link together sustainable development, poverty control and desertification control.

45. A number of desertification control activities form part of multilateral corporation measures, including those conducted by United Nations organizations and programmes, by the CGIAR centres and by regional scientific and technical centres, including those in Africa. For the first time, mention is made of activities supported through the Global Mechanisms.

46. The financial resources allocated for the implementation of the Convention and for desertification control are reported in a very uneven manner and in a range of different currencies. Some reports specify the annual totals, including those for the years 2000 and 2001; others provide only combined totals spread over several years, while some give no figures at all. Notwithstanding such inconsistencies, it is clear that desertification control efforts are continuing at the same level and, for some developed countries, even increasing. The greatest priority is attached to such efforts in Africa, followed by Asia, then Latin America and the Caribbean. Finally, some countries are focusing their cooperation efforts on a small number of affected countries, while others are conducting simultaneous activities in a wide range of affected countries in all three regions. In general, there is very little information on support provided to Central and Eastern Europe.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

47. The conclusions which may be drawn from the reports received and the resulting recommendations are divided below into four sections, with a further section on issues relating to the Committee on Science and Technology.

A. Conclusions on the organization and approach of the reports

48. Most of the developed country reports arrived after the deadline for the submission of reports set by the Conference of the Parties at its fifth session. No reports were received by the time of preparing the present synthesis from some countries which had previously submitted reports for the third and fourth sessions. Some countries submitted reports for the third session, others for the fourth session and some for both. In addition, the countries submitting reports to the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention were not necessarily the same as those which had previously submitted reports. Accordingly, it is very difficult to make any comparison over time of progress in the assistance provided to affected countries. The reports tend to be rather uneven in terms of their structure, content and financial information. The recommended structure is widely disregarded: only one report follows it closely while the others provide a general résumé which is laid out in the recommended manner but whose content does not follow the recommendations. The reports vary greatly in length, from 1 page to more than 40 pages. All these factors greatly complicated the synthesis exercise.

49. The developed countries all describe the modalities and aims of their cooperation. Some countries give considerable attention to their cooperation philosophy, strategy and policy, while others give detailed information on specific activities, both in the main text of the report and in annexes. These variations between the reports rendered it very difficult to synthesize them. In addition, the developed countries seemed to be at particular pains to explain why they were cooperating, why they were concerned about desertification and with whom they were cooperating. It was also difficult to single out activities directly related to implementation of the Convention from other desertification control activities.

50. Generally speaking, the reports are updates of previous reports and supplement the information that those already contained. In addition, three new reports have been submitted. In one case, the updated information has been gathered via a questionnaire circulated to the embassies of the countries concerned. Where regional priorities are concerned, 16 of the 17 reports deal with Africa, 13 with Asia, 8 with Latin America and the Caribbean and only 1 with Central and Eastern Europe.

B. Conclusions on the analysis of the consultative processes, partnerships, measures taken for the implementation of the Convention and other measures

51. The basic philosophy underlying cooperation between the developed countries and the affected countries is much the same in all the regions. The activities which they support tend to relate to the same issues and the only observable differences are due to their different biophysical circumstances. The African region appears to receive the greatest amount of support. Issues related to water resources are constantly grov ing in importance.

52. The reports demonstrate the considerable priority given to supporting consultative processes, even though relatively few projects are specifically designed to serve this purpose. A number of thematic projects have a popular participation component. The role of non-governmental organizations is clearly growing, particularly in measures to strengthen civil society and to boost the involvement of local populations in the taking of decisions on

desertification control projects which concern them directly. All the reports stress the need for partnerships in general, and there is increasing evidence of subregional solidarity, although not all the subregions in question have as yet adopted subregional action programmes.

53. In some developed countries there is evidence of increased efforts in the area of scientific research; these go hand-in-hand with corresponding coordination efforts within the country as well. There appears to be a serious need for a better understanding and better explanation of desertification in the context of increasing climate vulnerability and given the global nature of this process as one which ultimately concerns all countries, whether or not they are affected.

54. Certain countries draw attention to problems implementing the Convention and activities under the Convention. The first of these relates to internal coordination in certain affected countries, which is either inadequate or altogether lacking. Another derives from the excessively wide range of ministries involved (agriculture, rural development, livestock, water resources, forests, environment, planning, finance, foreign affairs, etc.). Other difficulties are encountered in the training of specialists and villagers, in dealing with land-tenure issues and in ensuring that the often precarious private sector remains dynamic.

C. Conclusions on synergies with other conventions and issues concerning the Committee on Science and Technology

55. Three reports refer to other environmental conventions and preparations for the Sustainable Development Summit in Johannesburg. These suggest two very interesting routes for the development of field projects, which take into account the goals of three conventions. The first such route is that of agroecology, designed to adapt locally cultivated plants to arid conditions and to halt the degradation of soils and loss of biological diversity by applying simple farming methods. The second route is to develop forestry both as a carbon sink and also to protect biological diversity and to safeguard the stability of the soil. These three reports state that field projects geared towards the objectives of the three conventions are already being implemented. A number of reports refer to GEF, regretting that the Facility does not provide much support for desertification-related projects.

56. The Committee on Science and Technology is only mentioned in two reports, in the context of work on indicators, both on the implementation of the Convention and on desertification evaluation and monitoring. The proposed indicators could be used to assist both affected countries and developed countries in preparing their future reports. There is only scant mention of work on traditional knowledge in the reports, with no reference to the Committee's recommendations. Finally, activities in support of early warning systems are mentioned in two reports, with relation to OSS and the AGRHYMET centre in Niamey.

D. Overall conclusions

57. The reports received give a reasonably good overview of the activities by developed countries to assist affected country Parties, thanks to the updated information which they contain. It is clear from the reports that efforts by developed countries to promote desertification control are continuing. These efforts should be anchored in broader strategic frameworks, such as the campaign against poverty, the promotion of sustainable development, and efforts to strengthen

the role of c. .l society and to foster decentralization. The level of financial support provided by developed countries and their extensive participation, together with that of the affected countries, in various meetings of the Convention bodies help enhance the standing of the Convention in the political dialogue between Parties. In addition, they give the Convention a comparative advantage, enabling it to create synergies, including between the three Rio conventions, in the sustainable management of the natural resources of the affected countries. At the same time, the reports give no clear indication of implementation modalities which would make it possible to commence the operational stage of the implementation of the Convention.

58. The important role allocated to scientific research in developed countries is rooted in the awareness that desertification, drought and their associated processes are global and transboundary phenomena. These phenomena necessitate better knowledge, closer monitoring and stronger subregional and regional efforts to ensure that they are viewed in a more harmonized way and to improve the methods employed to combat desertification. Generally speaking, however, not much information is provided on this issue.